

The VC visits

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 Yesterday, Prof Saiful reached Kushtia Circuit House along with some Buet teachers and officials. After having lunch there, they set out for Abrar's home and reached the village around 5:15pm.

Kushtia Deputy Commissioner Aslam Hossain, Superintendent of Police SM Tanvir Arafath, Kushtia Awami League General Secretary Asgor Ali, Kushtia Zilla Parishad Chairman Robiul Islam and other officials were with him.

The VC first met Abrar's grandfather Abdul Gafur. Talking to the VC, the grandfather burst into tears. At district administration officials' request, Abrar's father Barkatullah came to meet the VC.

Speaking to Prof Saiful, Barkatullah said he had been in Dhaka for 23 hours with the body of his son, but the VC did not meet him. "You only communicated with me over the phone."

Local Jubo League and BCL leaders and activists were present there.

The VC then went to Abrar's grave to offer fataha.

He went to Abrar's home, but could not go past the gate due to obstruction by a large number of people.

The demonstrators urged him to go back and resign. They also chanted slogans, demanding justice for Abrar.

When the VC was about to leave the place, the wife of one of Abrar's cousins laid down in front of his car. Police then removed her.

Talking to journalists before the VC's arrival, Barkatullah said, "I learnt that Amit [Saha] was one of the masterminds behind the killing, but his name was not included on the killers' list."

He said police prepared the list of the alleged killers and he was asked to sign it and he did.

In reply to a query, Barkatullah said he would talk to top police officials why Amit's name was left out.

Journalists asked the VC why he came to the village four days after the incident and why he did not even attend Abrar's namaz-e-janaza.

In response, he said he had to contact all, including the prime minister and education minister, and he had to make decisions observing the overall situation.

Prof Saiful claimed there was no fault on his part. "I tried to do many things. I talked to Abrar's maternal uncle and managed all the things."

He said he called the deputy education minister, who was in Mumbai at that time.

Incidents of students being tortured were not new at Buet. The authorities had taken steps after investigations, the VC said, adding they would take measures in connection with Abrar murder after enquiry.

He said he accepted all the demands of the students but would not resign.

Toxic liquor

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 ASM Abdur Razzak, civil surgeon of Khulna, said all the victims had a specific type of alcohol which was imported from India before their deaths. They were taken to hospitals after they felt severe chest pain and lost consciousness.

Two of the eight died at Gazi Medical College Hospital when rest of the six breathed their last at Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH), he said.

All the bodies were handed over to family members, said police.

Ashlam Bahar Bulbul, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station in Khulna, said two unnatural death cases were filed with his police station in this connection.

Two more cases were filed with Sonadanga Police Station regarding the unnatural deaths, said Momtazul Haq, officer-in-charge of the police station.

On information, Rasheduzzaman, deputy director of Department of Narcotics Control in Khulna, visited KMCH.

"Selling alcohol is strictly prohibited in our country. However, a vested quarter is importing liquor from India and selling it in the local market illegally. We are trying to find out who are behind the crime," he said.

Whale 'whispers'

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 A number of right whales -- an endangered species with only around 500 known specimens remaining.

They found that pairs of mother and calves reduced the number of loud, long-distance calls, compared to juvenile or pregnant whales.

The maternal pairings also increased the percentage of very quiet sounds they used to communicate.

Whereas a typical right whale call could be heard from roughly a kilometre away, the modified speech would only be audible at a range of 100 metres or so.

"These lower amplitude signals may minimise the risk of detection while still allowing mother-calf communication," said the authors of the study, published in the journal Royal Society Open Letters.

It would also "minimise the risk of eavesdropping by predators."



Police monitor as climate activists protest on the steps of the Ministry of Defence during the third day of climate change demonstrations by the Extinction Rebellion group, in Whitehall, central London yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Trio wins Nobel Prize in Chemistry

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 The trio will receive the prize for their work on developing a lightweight and rechargeable battery ever seen.

GOOD SCIENTISTS 'STAY PERSISTENT'

"This is such a wonderful thing, and I am very surprised," Yoshino told reporters in Tokyo after winning the prize.

He said he had only gotten a cell phone in recent years.

"I have long felt a bit of rejection towards mobile phones, so I have never had one until recently."

"I know the lithium ion battery really benefited mobile phones", he said, adding he did "not really" feel that he had helped make a product that benefited his life.

For Yoshino, a good scientist needed two qualities.

"One thing is that you have to have a flexible brain. Flexibility. The other is tenacity. You stay persistent and never give up."

Whittingham, 77, said he was "overcome with gratitude at receiving this award."

His research "has helped advance how we store and use energy at a foundational level, and it is my hope that this recognition will help to shine a much-needed light on the (US) nation's energy future," he said on the website of Binghamton University in New York where he is a professor.

Yoshino, 71, works at the Asahi Kasei Corporation in Tokyo and is a professor at Meiji University in Nagoya, Japan, while Goodenough holds the Cockrell Chair in Engineering at the University

of Texas at Austin.

The trio will receive the prize from King Carl XVI Gustaf at a formal ceremony in Stockholm on December 10, the anniversary of the 1896 death of scientist Alfred Nobel who created the prizes in his last will and testament.

Last year, the honour went to US scientists Frances Arnold and George Smith and British researcher Gregory Winter for developing enzymes used for greener and safer chemistry and antibody drugs with fewer side effects.

Arnold was just the fifth woman to clinch chemistry's most prestigious honour since Marie Curie in 1911.

This year's Nobel season kicked off on Monday with the Medicine Prize, followed by the Physics Prize on Tuesday.

The Literature Prize will follow today, with two laureates to be crowned after a sexual harassment scandal forced the Swedish Academy to postpone the 2018 award, for the first time in 70 years.

Names creating a buzz ahead of this year's literature prize include Canadian poet Anne Carson, Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Romanian poet and novelist Mircea Cartarescu and Polish writer and activist Olga Tokarczuk.

On Friday the action moves to Norway where the Peace Prize is awarded, with bookies predicting a win for Swedish teen climate activist Greta Thunberg.

The Economics Prize will wrap up the Nobel prize season on Monday, October 14.

UN worried over campus violence

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 beaten to death late night Sunday, allegedly by some Chhatra League leaders for freely expressing his views.

The Daily Star inquiry found that no one was brought to book for at least 151 killings that took place at universities since independence.

Deploring the killing of Abrar, UN Resident Coordinator Mia Seppo said it is horrific and nightmarish for her, a mother of two children going to university.

"Parents need to be able to trust that their children are safe in studying in university just as they need to trust that people are safe in public places..." she said at a talk organised by the Diplomatic Correspondents Association of Bangladesh (DCAB) at BISS auditorium in the capital yesterday.

Seppo said there has been concern about shrinking civic space and the ability of people, whether they are academics, students or the persons in the street, to express freely their opinions on political and other matters

of public interest.

"Attention to abuse of rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly has been urged by the international mechanisms," Seppo said.

It involves systematic changes, such as reviewing the Digital Security Act, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, Foreign Donations Act and their implementation, she added, hoping that the new chair and members of the National Human Rights Commission will make the body more effective.

Space of civil society and freedom of speech are some of the foundations for achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs), which speak of inclusive society, she said.

The UN official lauded Bangladesh for its impressive economic growth, contribution of 6,500 Bangladeshis to UN peacekeeping, and shaping SDG agenda, Global Compact for Migration, and climate debate.

However, she said Bangladesh faces a number of challenges that include

lower budget allocations for education, health and social protection, slow poverty reduction in urban areas, and unplanned urbanisation.

International benchmark is 20 percent for education, but it is 11.4 percent in Bangladesh. Also, international benchmark for health is 15 percent of budgetary allocation, but it is 3.4 percent in Bangladesh, she said.

To reap the benefits of the demographic dividend, children must become 3-4 more times more productive than today's adults, she added.

Turning to the Rohingya issue, Mia Seppo said it is a "common failure of all of us" that no repatriation took place in the last two years and that Myanmar has not created conducive conditions for Rohingya return.

She requested media not to create negative narratives about the Rohingya, including the ones that they are security threats and potential criminals. "Let's not forget they are human beings with dreams and aspirations just like you and me."

Not ministry, PWD to blame

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 Tk 36.4 crore in purchasing furniture and other household items for officials of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant in Pabna.

The bodies, formed by the housing and public works ministry, have also recommended departmental and legal action over the corruption against 50 officials, including Masudul Alam, former project director of Green City Housing Project under the power plant.

Identifying 15 sources of corruption at PWD, an ACC institutional team prepared the report with 20 recommendations.

ACC's report is based on interviews of PWD officers, annual reports, audit reports, media reports and its own findings.

Besides, for big projects, according to the report, cores of taka are allocated to PWD for repair and maintenance work.

"There are allegations that these are divided into small lots to award work orders to preferred construction firms owned either by PWD officers or their relatives," read the report.

The report said, "In a bid to give the work order to preferred construction firm, PWD in many cases makes other contractors non-responsive for

nominal reasons.

"Though the bid is offered through e-GP, preferred contractors are informed about the rate in advance and only those conditions that the preferred contractors possess are added as requirement to disqualify other bidders," it explained.

The ACC said though PWD carried out tender processes through e-GP, in some cases pressure from influential contractors or misappropriation of project funds by officials and engineers derails the works.

There are allegations against PWD of using substandard bricks, cement, iron rods and sand at different under development projects.

ACC said that there were allegations against some PWD officials that they conspired with contractors to unnecessarily increase project costs and embezzle money.

Often, PWD officials concerned do not pay bills to contractors unless they are given bribes, reads the report.

The volume of government's building construction, maintenance and development has increased several times, but PWD's manpower has not increased in line with those, resulting in slow pace of projects.

a Counter Technical Unit at Head of Procuring Entity (HOPE) office to prevent corruption at e-GP process, ensure the project's utility at the selection stage and monitor illogical time extensions.

It also suggested preparing a list of PWD officials who are involved in the construction business directly and indirectly, and give exemplary punishment to the contractors and engineers responsible for negligence or rule violations.

While handing over the report, ACC's Commissioner Mozammel said, "From estimation to implementation of a project, close monitoring is needed as there is extensive scope of corruption in these stages. Even there is collusion between officers and contractors at e-GP process."

"It is appropriate not to engage controversial officials in big projects," said Mozammel.

Meanwhile, Housing and Public Works Minister SM Rezaul Karim welcomed the ACC's report. "The report will be a guide to ensure transparency and accountability," he said.

"The prime minister has taken a zero tolerance policy. As a member of her cabinet, I won't tolerate minimum corruption," he added.

Punishment

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 moral degradation that is taking over it.

In this case, the government and the ruling party have to play the leading role. Otherwise, the entire nation will face a disaster, reads the statement.

Eleven eminent personalities gave the statement -- Anisuzzaman, Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, Syed Hasan Imam, Hasan Azizul Haque, Anupam Sen, Sarwar Ali, Ramendu Majumdar, Ferdousi Majumdar, Mamunur Rashid, Mofidul Haque, and Nasiruddin Yousuff.

The recent revelation of social crimes, drug trade, and corruption committed by Jubo League made "us disappointed and aggrieved", they said, adding that "it saddens and frustrates us" to see how student and youth organisations formed by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman have gone astray.

Bangladesh cannot remain hostage to a few unruly youth and student organisations, they said, expressing the hope that the government would

take prompt actions to address the situation.

Meanwhile, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) demanded a neutral investigation commission, which would inquire into the role of police and the Buet administration over Abrar's the killing.

Citing media reports, the rights organisation said police had gone to the dormitory where Abrar was being tortured, but they returned. When they went there for a second time, Abrar was already dead, it said in a statement.

ASK also questioned why Buet Vice Chancellor Prof Saiful Islam stayed away from the campus for long despite knowing about the murder.

In a separate statement Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (SHUJAN) called for a quick trial and the highest punishment for the killers of Abrar.

Murdering a student for expressing his views on Facebook has "shocked and aggrieved the entire nation," the civil society organisation said.

Search all university

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 politics, why should I talk about banning it?"

The PM, however, said if the Buet authorities want to do so, they can. "They have a Syndicate and a committee. They can do it. We won't interfere in it."

She also said this is an autocratic attitude that student politics should be banned.

The PM also questioned the justification of the student movement when the government is taking action against the offenders.

"Why is this movement? The trial [of the offenders] must be held. It's necessary to feel the pain of a mother or a father who lost their children. I understand it ... I lost my father, mother and brothers."

She mentioned that after learning about the incident, she asked police to immediately collect CCTV footage and evidence from the spot.

It is regrettable that policemen were obstructed by students when they were returning with the hard disk containing the CCTV footage, she said.

"The IGP informed me that police personnel were not being allowed to come out with the evidence and footage."

She said students obstructed police not because they were taking the CCTV footage but in fear that they would destroy the evidence. But police took steps for proper autopsy of the body, collected evidence and arrested those involved in the incident from different rooms of the Buet dormitory.

"My question is why police were obstructed from collecting evidence? ... they [police] later collected the footage and gave a copy of it to the authorities. Now police are identifying the offenders by examining the footage."

The PM said it is necessary to find out the reason for obstructing police as three hours were lost because of it.

Hasina said she immediately instructed Chhatra League leaders to expel all those involved in the murder. "I also instructed police to arrest them. We had taken steps before students took to the streets."

Referring to her India visit, the PM said the Awami League government always protects the country's interest, reports BSS.

She pointed out that the volume of water India would get from the Feni river is insignificant and meant only for drinking.

"We always protect our interest in all fields... the stretch of the river [Feni] from where India will take water is a catchment area and it belongs to Bangladesh. That is why we signed an MoU with India," she said.

She said her government has already discussed with India the water-sharing of the Monu, Mohuri, Khowai, Gumti,

Dhara and Dudhkumar rivers, and steps are being taken in this regard.

Besides, discussion is going on over the water-sharing of the Teesta river."

She also mentioned that the source of the Feni river is in Khagrachhari and about 94km-stretch of the river is along the Indian border.

Hasina said the scarcity of drinking water is acute in Tripura's Sabroom town, and the MoU was signed with India to give it 1.82 cusec water.

"The volume of water we will give to India is very insignificant and we will use most of the water of this big river."

"If anyone wants water for drinking purposes, and if we don't give that, it doesn't look good," said Hasina.

Taking a swipe at BNP leaders for criticising the Feni river deal, she said Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda Zia during their visits to India could not strike any deal on the water-sharing of the Ganges river.

"When the media asked Khaleda Zia about the issue of Ganges water-sharing upon her return [from India], Khaleda Zia said she forgot to raise the issue," she said.

"How could that party [the BNP] talk about the issue of Feni river when it forgot to protect the country's interest and realise the rightful demand for water of a big river like the Ganges?"

Turning to the recent deal for exporting LPG to India, the PM said she can never ever compromise the country's interest and everyone should know that.

"We always put our country's interest first and there is nothing to raise question about this. We import LPG in bulk, then we bottle it and supply throughout the country as per our demand. We will export part of the excess LPG to Tripura of India."

She mentioned that a new LPG item would thus be added to the country's export basket.

She also recalled the role of the people and the government of Tripura during Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 16
 Golam Moazzem, director of Centre for Policy Research, who unveiled the Bangladesh section of the GCI 2019 on behalf of the WEF.

The GCI 2019 showed that Norway continued to be the best performer in terms of press freedom for the second consecutive year.

Norway scored 92.2 on a zero to 100 scale in press freedom ranking in this year's GCI. In the scale, a score of 100 represents the optimal situation or frontier.

Bangladesh scored 49.3 in the freedom of the press this year, according to the GCI 2019.

Girl rescued

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 her family in the district's Kalapara upazila.

"One day, my mother's sister took me to Patuakhali town saying she was going to visit a doctor and she wanted me to accompany her. Once we reached, she left me at the Patuakhali bus stand. A man then came and told me he will take me back to my aunt but he took me to the house of Lipi Begum, the leader. I had been staying there ever since," she said.

She further said, "I want to stay with my family if they allow me to, adding, "Otherwise, I will go to Narayanganj where my father's sister lives."

The victim said she was sold to prostitution by her mother's sister and used to be frequently tortured at Lipi's house where she worked.

Speaking to The Daily Star over phone, the victim's mother said she received a call from Patuakhali police about her daughter.

"After my sister had come back from Patuakhali town those many years ago, she told me my daughter was lost from the bus stand. We searched for her for many days, but we never informed the police for fear of social stigma."

The victim's parents will go to Patuakhali police station tomorrow to

bring their daughter back.

Contacted, Md Mostafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Patuakhali police station, said, "If her parents file a case in this regard, we will investigate the incident and take proper steps."

US condemns Iraq violence, urges govt to exercise 'restraint'

AFP, Washington
 US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has condemned deadly violence during protests in Iraq and called on the country's government to "exercise maximum restraint," the State Department said Tuesday.

In a call with Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi, Pompeo "condemned the recent violence in Iraq and noted that those who violated human rights should be held accountable," the department said in a statement.

"The secretary lamented the tragic loss of life over the past few days and urged the Iraqi government to exercise maximum restraint."